

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC055780
Inspector	Chris Scully
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Residential special school (>295 days/year)

Registered person	Autism Initiatives (UK)
Registered person address	Autism Initiatives 7 Chesterfield Road Liverpool Merseyside L23 9XL
Responsible individual	Katharine Silver
Registered manager	Karen Lesley Taylor
Date of last inspection	26/03/2014

Inspection date	16/07/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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Young people thrive because they live in a supportive, caring and nurturing environment which enables them to make good progress. Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff and their peers. The home makes a positive difference to young people's lives and provides them with the tools and opportunities to achieve very positive outcomes. This is echoed by parents and social workers who say young people are cared for by a 'wonderful,' and a highly committed and dedicated group of staff.

The 'voice' of the young people is at the heart of everything the home does. Staff are skilled at using various communication methods to ensure young people are consulted and listened to on all aspects of their care and activities. This means young people thoroughly enjoy their time here.

Staff have a sound understanding of each young person's specific and complex needs. Care planning is comprehensive and personalised. Staff have high, realistic, aspirations for young people and work effectively to promote their growth, social and emotional development. Consequently, young people feel safe and are much more able to handle difficult and challenging situations. Parents say their children feel safe here and they know they are safe.

The home is well managed. The Statement of Purpose and young people's guide provide clear insight into the type of care and support each young person can expect to receive. Minor shortfalls in the detail of some aspects of the young people's guide have not affected the quality of care for young people. Records and documentation are well maintained and staff are embedding in the new recording systems. There are though some shortfalls with regards to plans being in place for when young people arrive and updated transition plans.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to care for up to eight young people with a learning disability. All young people considered for placement experience autistic spectrum disorder with associated communication and sensory impairment and possible learning disability. The home is owned by a national organisation. Young people who access this service access the organisation's school.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
26/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
10/12/2013	Full	good
13/02/2013	Interim	good progress
06/11/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure young people's health care needs are promoted in accordance with the placement plan in particular health care plans are in place for when new young people arrive at the home (NMS 6.5)
- enhance further the systems for monitoring the adequacy of record keeping in particular complaints records are sufficiently detailed information about medication is consistent within records and support plans are in place for when new young people arrive at the home (NMS 22.1)
- ensure the young people's guide make clear to young people that they can contact Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern and how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 13.5)
- ensure young people have access to independent advice and support from ad

who they can contact directly and in private about problems or concerns which is appropriate to their age and understanding (NMS 1.5)

- ensure reviews of young people's placement plans are recorded in young people's files in particular updated pathway plans and are pursued by the home. (NMS 25.8)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people are happy, comfortable and relaxed in the home. Parents and social workers are positive about the service, and confirm that young people enjoy improved outcomes. For example, some young people experience improved sleep routines, better access to community activities, and improved contact with their families. When children suffer setbacks in their health or welfare, staff respond quickly and effectively to secure appropriate specialist care that minimises the impact upon their health and well-being.

Young people feel emotionally secure, confident and settled in their time away from their family. Parents say they trust staff implicitly and one reported that, 'My child is happy and I'm content in that knowledge. The staff offer the same care that I would whilst supplying them with a structured and varied routine.'

The support offered to young people's individualised communication systems is a strength of the provision. Young people with special communication needs use systems suited to their individual skills and abilities, including some systems, such as symbols or signs, that they also use in school. They confidently engage with staff to let them know how their day has been or to ask for help or choose an activity. Some rely primarily on behaviour and gesture to communicate their immediate wishes, and depend on staff to interpret them correctly. High levels of consistent staff interact well with young people, and as a result, they grow in confidence. They demonstrate an increasing ability to express themselves through relaxed and trusting relationships.

Young people's social interactions have significantly increased due to the opportunities afforded to them in the home. They have greater access to a wider range of opportunities to explore the world they live in, build confidence in the community, and enjoy life to their full potential. Young people take opportunities to become more independent that are appropriate to their age and level of understanding. They enjoy a wealth of self-chosen activities during their stay such as youth clubs, parks, beaches, trips on the trains, barges and the big wheel.

All young people attend the organisations school and their attendance is very good. Transitions between home and school are managed extremely well. As a result young people arrive on time and are ready to engage with their learning. A school report said, "This is an excellent report which clearly shows the progress the child has made over the last year. He is actively and positively engaged in a wide variety of activities which he clearly enjoys.

Young people have excellent opportunities to keep in contact with their families and those people who are important to them. Social workers say young people have made

'exceptional progress' as they are now accessing transport which 'has opened up the world to them'. They have access to a range of electronic devices to talk and see their families including those with alternative communication methods can sign to their families. Parents say they value the time they spend with their children which is very well supported by staff. Families are warmly welcomed in the home and enjoy spending time here with their children.

Quality of care

good

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff. This is because staff have high aspirations for them and offer a service based on mutual warmth and respect. A parent said, 'I have always been more than happy with my child's placement and have always felt it was the right place for them.' This is because the staff and residential manager offer consistency of care and genuinely care about the young people.

Young people's choices are intrinsic to the organisation of the home and this is a real strength of the provision. This is because young people, including those who do not communicate verbally, actively participate in everyday decisions such as what they eat, including going shopping for their meals, activities and the décor in their rooms. Young people's points of view are taken seriously as staff respond to their suggestions or explain promptly why it may not be possible to achieve their requests.

Staff are extremely knowledgeable about individual children's levels of understanding and comprehension associated with disability. As a result, staff engage appropriately to provide the support and reassurance young people need to reduce their anxieties. They understand how best to communicate with individual young people in ways that young people easily understand. Systems are in place for young people to raise a concern within the home. However, not all young people currently have access to an independent advocate to act on their behalf. This means they may miss out on additional support from an external person at critical times for them such as moving on into adult services.

Staff know and understand the importance of individualised care plans for each child and young person. Keyworkers demonstrate strong and effective partnership with all relevant adults. They provide child-focused progress reports and attend regular independent review meetings for each individual. Some young people have made short films to present at reviews to ensure their wishes and feelings are 'heard' and acted upon.

Staff offer good support to young people who are moving on into adult services. They work collaboratively with social workers to ensure this is managed in a coordinated way to ensure a smooth transition for young people. However on occasion although the home attends and contributes effectively to all planning meetings, they are not always provided with an updated transition plan. This means they may not be fully informed of all of the decisions reached for the young person.

Care plans are generally comprehensive and allow the uniqueness of each young person to shine. Care plans take into account the diverse and complex needs of each young person. Young people's health care needs are usually well recorded: however on occasion health care plans are not immediately in place for young people who are new to the home. This impacts upon staff's ability to provide consistent care in the interim period. Young people's health care needs are effectively supported by the staff's commitment to working in partnership with parents, health care professionals, to ensure all young people receive the right medical attention, support and care.

Staff use language, symbols, activity planning boards, and warm and affectionate relationships, to assist young people to understand and participate in daily routines. This approach encourages young people to be as independent as possible, and make effective choices about their everyday lives. They choose the clothes they wear and what they would like to eat. Staff have realistic expectations of the young people, recognising achievements no matter how small and sharing them with a sense of pride. This increases the young people's confidence and self-worth.

The home is situated in a residential area and is in keeping with other family homes in the area. Over the last few months the home has sustained significant amounts of damage. There is an effective maintenance and repair process in place which means all areas of concern are being addressed. The home is also undergoing a major refurbishment which has seen the installations of new bathrooms and the dining room and some young people's bedrooms have been decorated. This has created a more homely environment in these areas.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people are safe and happy. Social workers and other professionals are complimentary about the care and attention staff give to vulnerable young people to ensure their safety and well-being. Parents say staff keep them very well informed about the welfare of their child and that they have every confidence that staff do their best to ensure their safety.

Young people are protected because of staff's secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and child protection procedures. This means they are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns. Positive relationships with social workers mean staff are fully aware of any issues which may impact upon young people's safety or well-being. Therefore, they are able to take appropriate action to support each young person.

Staff do not use restraint or sanction to modify behaviour. Instead they offer support and redirection for young people who demonstrate increased anxiety. Staff are highly skilled in de-escalation techniques, which means the need to use a low level touch support to support a young person is extremely rare. Staff create a warm and calm

environment that enables children and young people to communicate their needs and wishes.

They encourage young people to think about how to solve minor frustrations by offering simple boundaries that provide choice for everyone. For example when encouraging young people to share sweets they say X's turn now X's turn and encourage the young people to sign in agreement. Young people respond well to this structure, and they learn valuable skills in respecting the needs and wishes of others. All young people have individualised personal intervention and support plans (PISP's) which are regularly updated. However, these are not always in place for the young people new to the home and may hinder staff's ability to consistently managed set behaviours.

Young people are safe because staff carry out regular health and safety checks of the premises and obtain certifications for gas, electrical and fire safety checks. Young people are protected by a range of health and safety procedures and risk assessments that are consistently implemented in practice. Staff continually assess the environment to ensure young people are safe and make amendments to this as necessary; for example, carrying out additional checks during the maintenance work to ensure all hazards are removed from the areas utilised by young people.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is very thorough to make sure children are protected. The manager carefully ensures that staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of individual children. Also there are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors and contractors are suitably checked and supervised to protect children. Young people who check to see that staff and visitors have signed in and help to see visitors out at the end of their visit. This enhances young people's confidence when talking to people they may not be familiar with and helps develop an understanding of keeping themselves safe by ensuring the front door is closed.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager is also the head of care and has been in post for four years. She brings to the post a wealth of knowledge around young people with learning disabilities, having worked for the organisation for 18 years. The Registered Manager and staff have high but reasonable aspirations for each young person to help them achieve to their full potential so that they can enjoy everything life has to offer them. Professionals and parents offer high praise for the service and recognise that staff offer young people opportunities for development and growth that they may not otherwise have. Results clearly demonstrate the positive impact and value that living at the home has on the lives of young people, who grow in confidence and maturity, and develop skills in independence and self-determination.

The Statement of Purpose is shared with young people's families and placing

authorities. It is well written and provides a clear picture of the home's aims and objectives. This means that placing authorities and young people's families are well aware of the care and support young people can expect to receive. Each young person has their own young people's guide which is tailored to their specific needs and communication method. This is generally well written but does not have sufficient information on how to contact the regulator Ofsted or an independent advocate.

When parents, young people or professionals raise concerns or make complaints, managers ensure they follow procedures to work towards a satisfactory outcome. However the record of complaints lacks sufficient detail with regard to who took the initial concern, who actually investigated this and the outcome. This is a recording issue and does not impact upon the care provided. The home manages relationships with stakeholders well, including frequent contact with families. Parents feel valued and involved in their child's care as the home listens to them and works with them to ensure young people's needs are met.

Monitoring of the home is generally sound. An independent person for the organisation regularly monitors the home and provides detailed written feedback to the Registered Manager which enables them to rectify any issues. Monitoring by the Registered Manager is improving due to the recent introduction of a new monitoring document. Effective action has been taken to address the issues from the last inspection which has enhanced the health safety and well-being of young people with specific medical issues and the maintenance of the building. Although, some issues identified at this inspection had not been identified immediate action was taken to address these issues.

Records are clear and stored securely. Managers regularly audit care plans to ensure they remain up to date. This enables staff to contribute effectively to planning meetings for children in all areas of their lives such as their health, school, family contact and their futures. Managers oversee links with all professionals who support the children and ensure the home implements all identified actions immediately. Staff say they enjoy working at the home and are supported by effective and developmental supervision.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information about this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.